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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to determine factors which would predict Spanish ability in experienced bilingual teachers in order to plan language development lessons for prospective bilingual teachers. A review of literature on personality, social, and psychological factors in learning a foreign language suggests that there may be some correlation between these factors and native bilingualism as well. A study was undertaken of experienced teachers in graduate schools of education, all born in the U. S. and raised in Spanish-speaking homes. Tests were administered to assess language ability and personality factors. A discriminant function analysis was conducted to determine which of the 39 scores from these three tests were the most promising. In a second phase of the study, a regression analysis was conducted to measure the effects of the personality variables on the dependent variable of oral Spanish ability. The study was then generalized to a larger population. The results of this part of the study indicate that the findings of the first two phases could not be generalized to the population of native bilingual teachers. However, both studies indicated that formal Spanish courses do not necessarily lead to the development of active and passive language skills. (AMH)

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Who Becomes Bilingual? An Investigation into Personalities of Bilingual Teachers

Judith Walker de Félix

Paper presented at AATSP, San Juan, P.R. August 15, 1980

There is no doubt that bilingual education is an effective means for helping minority language children achieve in school (Zappert and Cruz 1977). With the tremendous growth of non English speaking populations in the United States and a Supreme Court decision declaring bilingual schooling to be a civil right, we can be assured that bilingual education is here to stay, although federal financial support may dwindle according to political trends.

The importance of bilingual programs to Spanish and Portuguese departments varies with the local situation. For the most part, however, they seem to have been linked by a common interest in language teaching but separated by a difference in philosophy and goals. For instance, while most Spanish/English bilingual programs are concerned with developing the Spanish classroom competence in prospective teachers, most college Spanish departments view the teaching of literature, particularly penninsular literature, as more prestigious.

As a Spanish teacher involved in bilingual teacher education, I was interested in determining the factors which would predict Spanish ability in experienced bilingual teachers in order to plan language development lessons for prospective bilingual teachers. For the initial study I selected native speakers of Spanish raised and educated in the U.S. The reasons they were selected were that these teachers have many linguistic as well as cultural advantages in classroom interactions, and although there has been

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increased interest in planning courses for native bilinguals, Spanish departments have been somewhat baffled by native United States bilinguals. It seemed that before we could plan effective language programs for this population we would need to know why, when given a cultural and familial background which promotes the use of a minority language, some potential bilingual teachers become truly bilingual while others prefer to use only the dominant language.

Undoubtedly social factors play a large role in each potential bilingual's decision to use one or both languages. But the social situation is similar for most native bilingual teachers. Gardner and Lambert's (1974) conclusion that personality factors may be the underlying difference in bilinguals' proficiency seemed to be a key in this study too.

The literature does not reveal much in the study of why some people, when given the opportunity, become fluent in two languages and others do not. In her bibliography Personality and Second Language Learning, Virginia Hodge (1978) includes no reference about native bilinguals. I likewise found no references to personality factors in Spanish and English of United States Hispanos: A Critical, Annotated Linguistic Bibliography. (Teschner, Bills and Craddock, 1975).

Researchers have found some personality factors to be influential in learning foreign languages. It is reasonable that some of these might influence native bilingualism also. Prawer (1974) noted that self-concept reflected good grades in foreign language classrooms, but Alvord and Glass (1974) found that self-concept and achievement correlate. So it might not be the use of another language but rather the achievement that is related to self-concept.

Brown and Richard (1972) noted an interdependence between self concept amd social responsibility, a factor which may be important to bilingual teachers, and which may reflect an instrumental motivation in the learning of Spanish.

Self concept may be an important predictor of language ability in this study also because of Brown's (1973) contention that any language learning process that results in meaningful communication involves some degree of identity conflicts regardless of the age and motivation of the learners. Fluent bilinguals must have good self concepts, it appears, in order to survive.

In his review of social and psychological factors in second language acquisition, Schumann (1978) reports no conclusive evidence that studies of motivation, ego permeability, tolerance for ambiguity, extroversion, empathy, or sensitivity to rejection show definite correlation with language ability. Self-esteem, depending on how it is measured, may be a factor.

To discover what personality factors might predict Spanish ability, a study was undertaken of bilinguals with similar backgrounds. All were experienced teachers admitted to graduate school in education, and although they were all born in the United States, all were raised in Spanish speaking homes. I hope to thus avoid participants who did not have the advantage of early Spanish use and those who had not experienced ethnic minority and consequently linguistic discrimination. All subjects claimed to be dominant in English and yet wanted to know Spanish better; therefore motivational differences were minimized. There was no requirement for formal study of Spanish. In fact the number of courses in Spanish each had taken ranged from zero to 29.

To assess their language ability, the Bilingual Syntax Measure II (BSMII) (Burt et al., 1977) was selected. It is a test of oral reception and production which not only describes the level of spoken Spanish but can also be used for diagnostic purposes. The measure also indicates Spanish ability along a continuum. The levels within this continuum provided the criteria for distinguishing between high and low speakers of Spanish in the study.

The results of the oral measure showed that only one participant was level 1, which indicates no Spanish. Level 2 shows an understanding of spoken Spanish and an attempt to respond but with answers that would be incomprehensible to native monolinguals of Spanish. These two groups were collapsed for statistical purposes. On the other end of the scale were 6N or native-like dialect speakers and the 6S or native-like standard speakers. Both groups of 6 were combined, not only for statistical but also for conceptual reasons. I did not want to penalize the fluent dialect speakers. The mean score for the sample was level 4. Scores of reading, writing, and listening ability were obtained from the Modern Language Association Test of Spanish, Form A.

Three standardized tests of personality were then administered with the assistance of a licensed psychologist. A discriminant function analysis was conducted to determine which of the 39 resultant scores from these 3 tests were the most promising. I also attempted to reason out their inclusion based on the literature in the field of the second language learning. The Tennessee Self Concept Scale (Fitts, 1964) is widely used in research and counseling and provides data on several aspects of how the respondents see themselves and how positive or favorable their self concept is.

The aspects of this scale investigated included the Total Positive Score, which attempts to assign an overall score to indicate the level of the subjects' good attitudes toward themselves. The Self Criticism shows the subjects' willingness to change and grow, and seems to be related to self concept. Finally, the Personality Integration score attempts to compare the subjects with well-adjusted individuals and seemed relevant to this study.

But self concept may have other aspects. We administered the California Personality Inventory (CPI) at the same time to see if factors included on it would predict Spanish ability. The CPI is an inventory designed to measure fifteen personality dimensions and includes three scales which check on validity for the individual respondent. It is considered one of the best personality instruments available, having undergone substantial and continuous validity research, including use with a variety of cultures (Anastasi, 1976). The sense of well-being measured by the CPI seemed to be a likely factor to predict Spanish ability since it appeared to be related to self concept. Similarly, the Dominance Score, which purports to measure social initiative, seemed to be related to self-concept, and it was included in this study. The subject's capacity for status also related to this investigation. Since the scale attempts to measure personal qualities which underlie status, it was reasoned that such qualities might also predict confidence in Spanish use.

The degree of open and close mindedness seemed to be personality variables important to this study. To measure this, we administered the Opinion Scale (Kleiber et al., 1974), which yields data on two variables which have been extensively researched in the last two decades, dogmatism

as defined and measured by Rokeach (1960) and locus of control based upon the instrument designed by Rotter (1966). The latter measure indicates the subjects' view of control in their life. Those with high externality scores see little hope of controlling their own destinies.

In addition to the factor of self-confidence there seems to be an indication in the literature of group identification that is important. Gardner and Lambert (1972) attempted to apply one of their earlier (1960) studies in this area to native French bilinguals. They had shown that Canadian Anglophones who wanted to integrate into the French culture were more successful at learning French than other high school students without this motivation. However, when Gardner and Lambert studied native French bilinguals in Maine, Connecticut, and Louisiana, their findings were inconclusive. I think perhaps it was because they measured the identification of French Americans with European French, rather than with their own American ethnic group. Also, their instrument could have been influenced by several intervening variables since its reliability and validity were not reported.

I wanted to avoid the subjectivism Lambert and his colleagues have been accused of, so I used the measure of Socialization on the CPI hoping to get at the same idea using a promising factor on a validated measure.

Included in the study were also some demographic information such as sex, age, and number of courses of Spanish studied.

The data were analyzed using a regression design to measure the effects of the personality variables just described on the dependent variable of oral Spanish ability. There were 51 subjects included in this phase.

The regression analysis indicated that the only variables which significantly predicted oral Spanish ability were the Total Positive Score, which accounted for 24% of the variance and, In conjunction with it, the Self-Criticism Score, which contributed another 16% of the variance.

Thinking that relying on one measure of language ability might be a limitation, an overall Spanish ability score was obtained by adding z scores for all four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This overall score became the dependent variable for the second phase of the study; only 27 subjects were included in this phase.

The results of the second phase showed that the Total Positive Score again was a significant predictor of overall Spanish ability.

The only other significant predictor was the Socialization score, accounting for 27% of the variance. It appears that those who scored high in socialization, that is those who respect their home culture, are those who speak, read and write Spanish better.

The multiple regression design is appropriate to predict Spanish ability in this specific population. However, the study, was thought to be more useful if it could be generalized to a larger population by testing the same variables on new subjects.

This was carried out during the summer of 1980 when 52 graduate students were enrolled in our bilingual education institute. Of this group 26 met the criteria previously described. They took the same tests and the data were subjected to the same multiple regression procedure.

The results of the follow-up study indicate that the findings initially reported cannot be generalized to the population of native bilingual teachers. In the follow-up group the self concept did not predict oral Spanish ability. In fact, the only tendency was for more dogmatic people to speak better, an outcome which contradicts the initial findings.

Some negative outcomes in both phases do have significance for Spanish and Portuguese teachers, however. In both studies the number of formal Spanish courses failed to predict oral language ability, validating the criticism native United States bilinguals have made of Spanish departments for several years.

I thought perhaps the lack of literacy skills in Spanish were at the root of this issue; maybe these teachers spoke well but could not read or write well. The two groups were combined to see if reading and writing scores would predict oral language ability, which indeed they did. In other words, the teachers who spoke better also read and wrote better. But these abilities were not due to formal Spanish study.

The writing score was the highest predictor of oral language ability, accounting for 49.4% of the variance. This appears to support Chastain's (1976) contention that language teachers should pay more attention to separating the receptive (i.e., listening and reading) from the productive (speaking and writing) skills rather than insisting on the audiolingual sequence of listening, speaking, reading and then writing.

The results of this study prohibit us from specifying exactly which personality variables predict Spanish ability in native bilinguals. I am now studying the differences between native and non-native bilinguals on the same personality variables. I am likewise comparing the bilinguals'

scores to the norms on the tests to see if any significant differences appear.

With the increase in native bilinguals mentioned in the beginning, it is necessary for Spanish and bilingual departments to collaborate in the study of the types of programs which will best develop the linguistic competence of native bilinguals in this country.

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